

DATELINE #131 WASHINGTON
ALINA ZERANSKI

NOVEMBER 24, 1976

WELCOME VISITORS TO THE SICK AND NEEDY
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND, WORDS AND MUSIC OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE NATION'S CAPITAL -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA (EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME). TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON AN AGENCY THAT HELPS PEOPLE COPE WITH ILLNESS IN A PROFESSIONAL BUT WARM WAY THAT DOES CREDIT TO THE HEALING ARTS.

NARR: MAUDE SEELY LIVES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA, NOT FAR FROM WASHINGTON, D.C. SHE IS 97 YEARS OLD. SHE IS PARTIALLY DEAF AND RECENTLY SUFFERED A DISLOCATED HIP AND A FOOT INFECTION. SHE LIVES WITH HER DAUGHTER, WHO IS HERSELF 79 YEARS OF AGE AND FINDS IT QUITE DIFFICULT TO GIVE HER MOTHER THE CONSTANT CARE SHE NEEDS. SHE DOESN'T WANT TO PLACE HER MOTHER IN A NURSING HOME. THESE TWO WOMEN LOVE EACH OTHER DEARLY AND WANT TO STAY TOGETHER. THANKS TO THE VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA THEY CAN STAY TOGETHER. THE ASSOCIATION IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WHICH NEXT SPRING WILL MARK ITS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF SERVICE:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- DUNN

"THE PURPOSE OF VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION IS TO PROVIDE CARE, BEDSIDE CARE, TO PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES. WE PROVIDE NURSING, HOME HEALTH AID OR NURSING-ASSISTANT CARE, PHYSICAL THERAPY, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND SPEECH THERAPY SERVICES. WE ALSO HAVE A PART-TIME SOCIAL WORKER WHO ASSISTS THE NURSES WHO VISIT THE PATIENTS AND HELP THE PATIENTS TO FIND OTHER RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITIES TO MEET THEIR VARIOUS NEEDS. SOMETIMES THEY NEED ASSISTANCE TO FIND OTHER FUNDS OR TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER PROGRAMS."

NARR: THAT WAS MARY ELIZABETH DUNN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AGENCY. SHE'S A REGISTERED NURSE WITH 35 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE. AND SHE BELIEVES THAT PUTTING ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO NEED CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE INTO INSTITUTIONS IS A POOR IDEA. SHE POINTS OUT THAT MANY PEOPLE DIE QUICKLY WHEN THEY ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS AND THAT MANY OTHERS BECOME VERY UNHAPPY. THE SERVICES OF VISITING NURSES CAN HELP MANY OF THESE PEOPLE STAY INDEPENDENT LONGER.

THE AGENCY'S CASE LOAD CONSISTS CHIEFLY OF PERSONS SIXTY YEARS AND OLDER. BUT VISITING NURSES ALSO HELP NEW MOTHERS, OFFER REHABILITATION AFTER STROKES, GIVE POST-OPERATIVE CARE, DRESS WOUNDS AND GIVE INJECTIONS TO PATIENTS OF ALL AGES. THEY ALSO TEACH PATIENTS' FAMILIES HOW TO CARE FOR LOVED ONES. AND HELP CONVALESCENTS TO LEARN HOW TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES. THIS VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION -- ONE OF MANY IN THE UNITED STATES -- SERVES ALEXANDRIA, ARLINGTON AND FAIRFAX COUNTY, SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE WASHINGTON, D.C. THAT ARE HOME TO ABOUT 800-THOUSAND PEOPLE.

TAPE 1 CUT TWO -- DUNN

"WELL, IT STARTED WITH ONE NURSE, ORIGINALLY, AND LATER ON, ONE OF THE PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES MADE A CONTRACT WITH THE VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION TO VISIT THEIR INSURED PEOPLE WHEN THEY WERE SICK AND TAKE CARE OF THEM. THEN IT GREW TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND WAS A FREE-STANDING ORGANIZATION IN THE COMMUNITY, AND A GOOD DEAL OF ITS WORK WAS FREE CARE FOR THE SICK POOR."

NARR: THIS YEAR, THE VISITING NURSES HAVE PROVIDED 24,600 VISITS TO OVER ONE THOUSAND PATIENTS, OPERATING ON A BUDGET OF MORE THAN HALF A MILLION DOLLARS. MOST OF THE PATIENTS HAVE LIMITED MEANS AND CANNOT PAY AT ALL OR VERY LITTLE. SO THEIR BILLS

NARR: ARE COVERED MAINLY BY NATIONAL HEALTH AID PROGRAMS OR
(CONT'D) SOMETIMES BY PRIVATE INSURANCE POLICIES. IF THERE'S NO WAY
FOR A PATIENT TO PAY, NURSES' SERVICES ARE PROVIDED ANYWAY.
THE DEFICIT IS COVERED BY CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- DUNN

"WE HAVE A TOTAL STAFF IN THIS AGENCY OF 46. WE HAVE ...
ABOUT 25 NURSES IN THE FIELD AND EIGHT HOME-HEALTH AIDES AND
SOME THERAPISTS... WE DON'T USE MANY VOLUNTEERS BECAUSE AS
WE GIVE CARE TO THESE PATIENTS, IT MUST BE PROVIDED BY PEOPLE
WHO ARE PROPERLY LICENSED, AND THEY HAVE TO MEET PROFESSIONAL
STANDARDS."

NARR: EVEN THOUGH NURSES' SALARIES ARE LOW, ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES
DO MOUNT UP. SO VOLUNTEERS HELP OUT WITH THE COLLECTION OF
DATA. ADDITIONAL HELP COMES FROM RED CROSS VOLUNTEERS WHO
PROVIDE COMPANIONSHIP, EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, AND EVEN DO
SHOPPING ERRANDS FOR THE PATIENTS. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SEND
HOT MEALS TO PATIENTS. VISITING NURSES EVALUATE THE PATIENTS'
NEEDS AND COORDINATE THESE EFFORTS.

CHRISTINE LOPATA IS A YOUNG NURSE WHO SUPERVISES THE VISITING
STAFF:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- LOPATA

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"ONE PATIENT THAT WE ARE SEEING RIGHT NOW IS AN ELDERLY LADY
ABOUT 75 OR 78 YEARS OLD. SHE HAS BEEN A DIABETIC MOST OF HER
LIFE AND IS ON INSULIN, AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN INDEPENDENT WITH
HER INSULIN ADMINISTRATION, BUT RECENTLY, BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS
WITH HER VISION, SHE IS NO LONGER ABLE TO ACCURATELY FILL HER
SYRINGES. SO, THE NURSES VISIT HER ABOUT ONCE A WEEK AND
FILL THE SYRINGES FOR HER. THEY LEAVE THEM AND THEN SHE IS
ABLE TO TAKE THEM EACH DAY AS SHE NEEDS IT. WE ALSO PROVIDE
HER WITH A CHECK OF HER BLOOD PRESSURE. WE LOOK AT HER SKIN
TO SEE IF IT IS IN GOOD CONDITION. WE HAVE REFERRED HER TO
A PODIATRIST (FOOT DOCTOR) TO HELP WITH FOOT CARE, AND WE
ALSO JUST GO OVER ANY GENERAL HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT SHE MIGHT
HAVE."

NARR: THE WORK OF THE VISITING NURSES UNDERSCORES HOW ESSENTIAL HOME CARE IS FOR OLDER PATIENTS ESPECIALLY. SEEING PATIENTS IN THEIR HOMES GIVES NURSES NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE NEEDS OF SICK PEOPLE. IN FACT, DIRECTOR DUNN HOPES THE MONEY CAN BE FOUND TO PROVIDE 24-HOUR-A-DAY SERVICE. RIGHT NOW THE SERVICE IS PROVIDED ONLY EIGHT HOURS A DAY, ALTHOUGH MESSAGES ARE TAKEN DAY AND NIGHT.

THE VISITING NURSES HAVE PROVED THEY ARE MORE NEEDED THAN EVER BEFORE.

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WJL/CAK